

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L HONG KONG 12972

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF
SUBJ: UNHCR OFFICIAL HOMAN-HERIMBERG VISIT TO HONG KONG/MACAU

REF: HONG KONG 12849 (NOTAL)

1. HOMAN-HERIMBERG, ACCOMPANIED BY UNHCR REP CARPENTER, DISCUSSED REFUGEE SITUATION WITH MACAU GOVERNOR AND SOCIAL WELFARE UNDERSECRETARY SANTOS DURING SEPT 12 MACAU VISIT AS WELL AS STOPPING TO SEE DIFFERENT ACTUAL AND POTENTIAL REFUGEE SITES. MACAU GOVERNOR INFORMED HIM THAT MACAU WILLING ACCEPT MORE REFUGEES IN TRANSIT FROM HONG KONG, BUT EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT IF MACAU TAKES TOO MANY HONG KONG REFUGEES, IT MAY HAVE DIFFICULTLY FINDING ACCOMMODATION FOR FUTURE DIRECT MACAU ARRIVALS. WHEN HOMAN-HERIMBERG ASKED IF PORTUGUESE GOVT IN LISBON SHOULD BE APPROACHED REGARDING TRANSFER OF MORE REFUGEES TO MACAU, GOVERNOR SAID IT WAS NOT NECESSARY AND THAT UNHCR SHOULD DEAL DIRECTLY WITH MACAU GOVT ON THIS MATTER.

2. DURING HOMAN-HERIMBERG DISCUSSIONS WITH HONG KONG GOVT (HKG) OFFICIALS, WE UNDERSTAND HE WAS TOLD THAT
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UNHCR STAFFING AND STRUCTURE WAS NOT ADEQUATE HERE. AN INCREASE IN UNHCR STAFF WAS REQUESTED AND, IN RESPONSE TO SPECIFIC QUESTION, HE WAS TOLD HKG BELIEVED THAT HONG KONG/MACAU UNHCR OPERATION SHOULD BE SEPARATE ENTITY AND NOT REMAIN UNDER UNHCR KUALA LUMPUR. HKG SOURCE SAID THAT IN TALKING WITH HOMAN-HERIMBERG IT COULD BE SENSED HE WAS NOT PLEASED

WITH UNHCR PERFORMANCE HERE. FOR EXAMPLE, ON CARE AND MAINTENANCE, HE WAS NOT IN AGREEMENT WITH LOCAL UNHCR RELIANCE ON COMMERCIAL OPERATORS, SUCH AS MAYFAIR GROUP, WHO APPEAR TO HIM TO BE CHARGING TOO MUCH. HE REPORTEDLY BELIEVES UNHCR SHOULD MAKE EFFORT GET MORE LOCAL VOLAGS INVOLVED IN CARE/ MAINTENANCE.

3. HKG APPARENETLY TOLD HOMAN-HERIMBER THAT IT WILL UNDERTAKE SEARCH FOR REFUGEES SITE(S) TO BE TURNED OVER TO UNHCR, BUT IT MAY TAKE TIME. CURRENT IDEA WOULD BE FOR UNHCR TO ASK LOCAL VOLAG TO OPERATE SUCH REFUGEE ACCOMMODATTION SITE, WHICH WOULD BE LABELED TRANSIT CAMP. WE UNDERSTAND THAT LOCAL VOLAG, HONG KONG CHRISTIAN SERVICE, INDICATED IT MIGHT BE ABLE PROVIDE FOOD FOR CAMP PER CAPITA COST OF \$3 DAILY. AT PRESENT TIME HKCS (ONLY VOLAG SO FAR INVOLVED) IS ASSISTING UNHCR AT TOW LOCATIONS, ONE A VACATION SCHOOL IT OPERATES AND WHERE SOME REFUGEES ARE ACCOMMODATED, AND OTHER AT HOUSE WHICH UNHCR RECENTLY RENTED AND WHICH HKCS RUNS AT DAILY CHARGE PER REFUGEE OF \$5 INCLUDING FOOD.

4. WE HOPE THAT ORM DIRECTOR LOWMAN WILL BE ABLE TO MEET WITH HOMAN-HERIMBERG IN KUALA LUMPUR FOR DISCUSSION OF HONG KONG/MACAU REFUGEE SITUATION.
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